



The Director's Job Description

IC 36-12-2-24

Just as there is confusion about the role of the library board member, there is confusion about the director's role on the board team. The director is first an employee of the board, but the relationship between the board and the director is not the typical employer/employee relationship.

In most businesses, the employer is the expert in the business and probably knows more about the business than the employees. The library board members' job is to make sure the library operates well and in the best interest of those the library serves, not to demonstrate expertise in managing a library. The board must hire a qualified director to manage the day-to-day operations.

After board members carefully hire a qualified director they trust, they delegate all management responsibility to that director. The board's job becomes one of monitoring the director's work to make sure the board's long-range goals are carried out properly. For more thorough discussion of director evaluation, see Chapter B, Task 4.

This delegating/monitoring relationship the board has with the director is very difficult to master because it is such an unusual employer/employee relationship. But a citizen board governing a qualified director is a good system. It has the best elements of both worlds--a board of trustees who represents the best interests of the community, and a qualified director (IC 36-12-11-6 & 590 IAC) who has the skills to make the library run efficiently within the parameters set by the board.

The director is much more than just an employee of the board. The director is a valuable resource to the board on all issues and often the leader on many issues that come before the board.

The director should sit at the board table during all board meetings and should be encouraged and expected to make well-supported recommendations on all issues that come before the board.

"The director's duty is to carry out the day-to-day functions of running the library within the parameters set by the trustees."

The director is a vital part of the board team

The director should be expected to take part in board deliberations whenever necessary to help the board make decisions in the best interest of the library. There should rarely be an occasion when the board meets without the director as part of the meeting.

***The board
delegates
day-to-day
management
to the director***

The director is charged with virtually all of the day-to-day management, and it must be understood by both staff and board that the director is the authority in matters of routine management.

The director has the responsibility to:

- implement the policies of the board.
- represent the library in negotiations, public relations and other public events.
- recommend staff for hiring.
- direct, supervise, educate, evaluate and discipline all staff.
- prepare the annual budget for approval by the board.
- manage the finances of the library.
- oversee the assets of the library.
- plan the annual operations of the library to fit into the long-range plan of the board.
- assist the board in the governance of the library by informing the board of the status of the library and recommending policy direction for the board.
- report to the board the results of board actions.
- remain current and knowledgeable about the library and appropriate methods of operation.
- prepare an annual report of the progress of the library and submit that report to the board.

When a good director does a thorough job of managing the library, board members easily become concerned that they are giving up their job and becoming a "rubber stamp" for the management.

A good director does not make a "rubber stamp" board

But the truly "rubber stamp" board is one that simply approves, without good discussion and deliberation, all recommendations from the director. A "rubber stamp" board does not thoroughly monitor and evaluate the progress of the library.

A board that does a good job of delegating management takes nothing at face value, but expects the director to supply options and alternatives, and expects to have plenty of time for good deliberations on all issues.



A board doing its job right will have good systems of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the library and demand accountability from those who have been delegated to manage the library.

When the director does a good job of facilitating the board's work, the board can concentrate on the big policy and planning issues.

Although the board delegates a great deal of responsibility for management of the library, the board retains ultimate responsibility for everything that happens in the library. Therefore, board members should expect a continuous flow of information from the director to help them in their monitoring and evaluating role.

The director has an important reporting responsibility

It is the right and responsibility of the board to request from the director all information necessary to fulfill the board's governing responsibility. It is the director's obligation to report to the board accurately and completely about how the library is being managed--problems, plans, progress.

The director is responsible to the whole board, but not responsible to each board member. When delegating to the director, the board must speak with one voice. When giving direction to the director, the board must speak with one voice. When asking for accountability from the director, the board must speak with one voice.

The director has one boss--the full board

Individual board members, even the board president, have no power to make demands of the director and should avoid trying to exercise power they don't have.

This, of course, does not rule out individual board members asking the director for clarification about issues facing the board or discussing with the director concerns that individual board members may have. But it does rule out individual board members making demands of the director or giving orders to the director. The director cannot serve many masters and still manage the library efficiently.

